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- ¹ This review is about two books which were already published some years ago (2000 and 2001). But their messages have not aged since the date of publication. The picture which Jean-Marc Berlière and the contributors to the book he co-edited with Denis Peschanski, have drawn of the role of the French police(s) during this crucial period of French and

European history has not been reworked decisively by any other historian in recent years. But there is more than French police history in the books: The book on the French policemen during the German occupation provides a significant contribution to more general, comparative aspects of police development as well. The publication on the French police from the beginnings of the 1930s to the early 1950s adds quite nicely to this: It is very much a handbook on the French police(s) during this period and can be used as a sort of compendium on police developments in France during a very significant period. Most of the contributions of the book focus on the institutional structures of the police, going down to the local and regional police level.

- 2 The book on the occupation and *épuration* years has a more complicated structure. It is not simply a straightforward text, but contains a number of texts and subtexts: Its main focus is on the police during times of war, of occupation, of transition from war to peace and victory. But the book deals with the ambivalences of police culture as well, with the responsibility of the police as an institution and with the responsibility of individual police agents. Part of the picture is a detailed account of the *épurations*, the French police experienced at the end of the war and in the later years. These *épurations* had been for a long period a forgotten and deliberately neglected history. Jean-Marc Berlière's research is based on a number of prerequisites, the most important one being a very intimate knowledge of the sources. Jean-Marc Berlière has more or less 'discovered' the sources on the *épuration* of the French police, which had been neglected until then, or, even worse, had been said to be no longer existent. Jean-Marc Berlière not only discovered the sources, but he uses them in a way which reveals that his interest in them goes beyond a scholarly perspective. Writing about police history means for him taking part in a political and societal debate. But when doing so, Jean-Marc Berlière never gives up one of most important virtues of the historian's craft: Considering carefully which conclusions and interpretations the sources allow and which not.
- 3 When using these sources, Jean-Marc Berlière touches upon a number of extremely troubling topics of French history during this period, the most troubling being that more than 90 percent of the Jews who have been deported from France had been 'handled' by the French polices and not by the German (in-) security apparatus. Jean-Marc Berlière emphasises that the French polices had not been forced by the German authorities to do this nor 'stumbled' accidentally into it, but had involved themselves into it explicitly and on their own, following administrative patterns and routines. The same can be said about the anti-communist strategies of the French police. The author devotes a chapter to this matter, showing how the municipal police in Paris engaged itself into this *lutte anticommuniste*. Jean-Marc Berlière adds another aspect to this: In a detailed manner, partly on the basis of portraits of individual members of the police, of victims and other contemporaries, Jean Marc Berlière points out to very significant continuity patterns within the ranks of the French police personnel across the political changes the French republic had experienced since the early 1930s. Which meaning do these continuity patterns have for the repressive practices of the French police during the war? Other historians have dealt with this question, for example the Dutch historian Guus Meershoek in his study on the Amsterdam police during the German occupation¹. Jean-Marc Berlière touches upon the issues, but does not (yet) discuss them in a very systematic manner.
- 4 But the issues are there, and it is at this point that Jean-Marc Berlière books opens up for more general aspects of police development and history. Since years, police history in Europe and in Northern America has turned into a scholarly field, which opens itself to

different approaches: Far from turning the focus on the history of the institution police only, police history has developed successfully into a research endeavour at the crossroad of political and social history and has increased our understanding of how the modern police has become a key state and societal institution. This key role becomes particularly visible during times of political and societal changes and ruptures. Jean-Marc Berlière describes to what extent the police French police during the German occupation ‘fitted’ into this pattern: During the beginnings of the German occupation, the Vichy regime took the opportunity to *étatise* the French police far beyond the few major cities which had had a national state police already. Jean-Marc Berlière points out a feature familiar from police developments in other European countries such as Belgium and Germany, but other countries as well: We can observe political and state authorities trying to implement police institutions for law and order enforcement designed to back the ‘order’ these authorities want. The *étatisation* project had been an object of intense political debate in the previous decades, but had not been successfully achieved during these years. Jean-Berlière discusses the implications of this project for the police culture: It reinforced its hierarchical structures and the meanings these structures implied, it had implications for cultures of control in relation to the public and the clients of the police. Under the conditions of an occupied country, and of an explicit policy to suppress, to marginalize, to exclude, and to deport, the reinforcement of specific patterns of police culture which Jean-Marc Berlière describes, turned out to be – literally – lethal for those the police dealt with.

NOTES

1. Guus Meershoek, *Dieneren van het gezag. De Amsterdamse politie tijdens de bezetting*, Amsterdam, Van Genneep, 1999, 488 p., ISBN 90-5515.223-4/NUG1641.

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